

voices tonight to endorse the legislation put forth by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) and state that veterans deserve fundamental, sound health care in this country. Veterans' families also need that kind of health care because veterans fought for their families in foreign wars. As we move forward with health care, remember the veteran, remember the veteran's mother, remember all those in rural areas that we can work collectively to find ways to manage health care in urban, suburban and rural areas.

However, I came here tonight to talk about this lump of coal. This lump of coal and coal throughout the world for the last several hundred years has provided heat, warmth, security and in recent times electric power which has transformed civilization. Coal has fueled the modern era. Coal is made up mostly of something called carbon. Coal has been developed on our planet naturally by geologic forces over millions of years. As the carbon on the surface in the form of animals, plants, vegetation, rocks, you name it, gradually deteriorated, was forced underground, in some cases in mountainous areas, in other cases, flat areas, but basically was forced underground, sometimes 100 feet, sometimes miles.

When this lump of coal, which is made mostly of carbon, was locked up underground over a long period of time, it took an element out of the atmosphere called carbon dioxide, CO₂, and locked it away. Over eons of time, these geologic forces, whether there was a lot of CO₂ in the atmosphere or much less CO₂ in the atmosphere, the geologic forces changed the climate.

Now the most recent climate change came about 10,000 years ago when the Ice Age ended. As the Ice Age ended, we moved into a warming trend. Over the last 10,000 years, the rate of warming has been about 1 degree centigrade every 1,000 years on a steady rate. That is 1 degree centigrade every 1,000 years.

Since we have been burning coal, which is carbon and then it turns into CO₂, we have been releasing into the atmosphere the amount of CO₂ in decades what it took nature to lock up over millions of years.

So in the last 150 years, the earth has warmed about 1 degree centigrade. Previous to that time, the earth had been warming 1 degree centigrade every 1,000 years. Since we have been burning fossil fuel, we have been warming the surface of the earth's temperature, reducing glaciers, thinning the ice cap in the Arctic Ocean by about 40 percent. The American Geophysical Union, the National Academy of Sciences, a group of scientists which President Bush appointed, has confirmed that the earth from human activity has been warming fairly significantly over the last 100 years, but especially over the last 50 years.

Carbon is locked up in this piece of coal. When this piece of coal burns, it releases carbon dioxide which is one of

those elements naturally occurring in the world, naturally occurring in the atmosphere that balances the heat for the climate. When we infuse a significant amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the climate begins to warm faster. In fact, the EPA and other scientific institutions in the United States say that over 90 percent of the CO₂ released in the United States comes from burning fossil fuel.

What I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, is this chart that actually goes from 1750 up to the year 2000. We can see from 1750, 1800, 1850, burning fossil fuel was minimal, so we do not increase CO₂ in the atmosphere very much. But once we get into the 1900s, especially 1950, CO₂ increases in the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels has had a dramatic effect. CO₂ is a naturally occurring element in the world. When we increase that element by the magnitude that we have, we have the potential for climate change.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FUND VETERANS HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, first, I want to salute coach the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) and express my appreciation to him on his leadership on the Rural Veterans Access to Health Care legislation.

A concern that I have with veterans health care is the lack of access rural veterans experience in seeking treatment at a VA facility. I represent a largely rural area of Virginia in which over 60,000 veterans reside. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, over 96,000 veterans were treated last year at a VA facility. There are only three VA medical centers located in Virginia to serve these deserving and eligible veterans. The VA has worked hard to expand their services, and they have opened three community-based outpatient clinics, four vet centers, and six mental health satellite clinics throughout the State. Unfortunately, more is needed.

The Salem, Virginia VA Medical Center, serving southwest Virginia has identified the lack of access to care for rural veterans as a big challenge that it faces. They provide services for at least 11,000 enrollees in my district alone each year. It is essential that more community-based outpatient clinics be established to accommodate our Nation's veterans living in rural and outlying communities.

I am very concerned that the proposed increase for veterans health care

in the fiscal year 2005 budget is only \$1.2 billion over the amount enacted in 2004. It is proposed that we allow \$29.7 billion to meet the medical care needs of the over 4.2 million people treated in VA health care facilities each year across the country.

I believe that we need to take care of our veterans' needs first before we send our money overseas to help foreign countries. Veterans deserve the benefit of full funding of their health care system. I believe, along with a number of my colleagues, that we need to reduce the amount for international affairs in the concurrent budget resolution and increase the funding for veterans benefits and services by at least \$3 billion so that we can improve veterans' health care. I repeat, decrease foreign aid by at least \$3 billion and increase veterans health care by at least \$3 billion.

In fact, I would gladly support increasing VA health care by \$4 billion or \$5 billion. I have had a great deal of contact with many of our veterans over the last few months, and the sentiment among them is that their health care is being shortchanged. Over the years, we have supplied billions in foreign aid to countries like Peru and Iraq. We gave them millions upon millions of dollars. Also Ethiopia, South Africa, Mexico, Indonesia, to name only a few.

In fiscal year 2005, the proposed budget for international affairs will increase discretionary spending to \$31.5 billion, a 7.5 percent increase from fiscal year 2004, and approximately two-thirds of that goes to foreign aid.

I believe that we must carefully evaluate and prioritize our funds. We have a responsibility to support our veterans and to provide them with the best possible health care and to ensure that veterans have access to that care. We need to start prioritizing our needs as a Nation above those of foreign countries which have not always stood by us. The veterans have stood by us. They have carried the fight for us. They have made America great. We need to fund them.

Mr. Speaker, we do not need to fund the foreign countries that have not stood by us. I will not read the whole list, but there is a long list of recipients of foreign aid, and they have not been at our side recently, and have often not been at our side in the past. Let us fund veterans and not fund foreign countries who have not helped us.

VETERANS HOSPITALS STRUGGLING TO MEET DEMANDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, the men and women of the Armed Forces serve this country honorably. They put their lives on the line in order to protect our freedom and our values. We owe them our gratitude, and they deserve to be recognized and fairly compensated for their service.

□ 2045

They also deserve to receive the benefits and the health care that they need and have earned.

We are all aware of the crisis facing VA health care. Veterans are waiting unconscionable lengths of time for appointments. The President's now out-of-date Web site claims his fiscal year 2004 budget, the year we are in, which Congress increased by \$1.3 billion last year, would enable the VA to eliminate the waiting lists by the summer of 2004, this summer. Well, that is not the truth. That is not going to happen. Instead, VA hospitals are struggling to meet increasing demand; and year after year, my colleagues and I have to fight to increase the underfunded VA budget.

Veterans in rural States, such as Maine, face all of these problems, amplified by the fact that they may have to travel hundreds of miles to the nearest VA health facility.

Maine's single VA hospital, Togus, is located 100 miles from our southern border and 300 miles from our northern border. As anyone familiar with the cold and snowy winters will tell you, those kinds of distances are difficult, not to mention dangerous, to travel in the winter.

The VA has established access guidelines which provide that a veteran should be able to access primary care within 30 miles or 30 minutes from their homes in urban areas, and 60 miles or 60 minutes in rural areas. Only 59 percent of Maine veterans enrolled in the VA health care system meet those guidelines, and that means that more than 16,000 Maine veterans live outside the access standards, not to mention the veterans who have not even enrolled to get VA health care. Perhaps one of the reasons they do not seek VA health care is because they are so far away.

The VA's guidelines for access to inpatient hospital services provide that a veteran should live within 2 hours of inpatient services. Only 52 percent of Maine veterans meet this guideline.

Let me give you an example of what this all means in my State. Veterans in Maine, veterans have to travel to get specialized care, often to a Boston VA hospital; and if a veteran lives in the northern part of the State, say Caribou or Fort Kent, he probably cannot make a bus trip to Boston in one day. He will have to stay overnight in Bangor or Portland and take the rest of the ride the next day. On the third day, the veteran may finally have his appointment, and then either start back that day or the next day.

So you can see to get specialized care in Boston, a veteran from northern Maine may take 3 to 5 days to go down and get that care. Of course, a relative or friend may make the drive, and it might happen in 2 days or 2½ days instead of 3 to 5; but the problem is, how many people can afford to do that, how many people have the help they need?

We need to enable veterans living in the most rural parts of our country to

benefit from the same accessibility to services that veterans in more urban areas enjoy. In Maine, the VA staff did town hall meetings throughout the State to develop a market plan for the VA CARES process, and this plan recommended five new community-based outpatient clinics in rural areas to improve access, in addition to collaborating with the State's successful telemedicine program and to the continued use of contract care.

I urge my colleagues to take to heart these difficulties faced by veterans in rural areas. Expanding access to care, particularly in these rural areas, must be a focal point of our efforts to reduce the huge backlog of veterans waiting for health care.

As we consider the fiscal year 2005 budget and when we review the final CARES national plan, we must not let down our Nation's veterans. First, they deserve the highest quality of care, but we also must ensure that the VA health system provides access to that care for all veterans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WASHINGTON WASTE WATCHERS REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as cofounder of the Washington Waste Watchers, a Republican working group dedicated to bringing the disinfectant of sunshine into the shadowy corners of the wasteful Washington bureaucracy.

As we speak, Congress is engaged in a debate over spending and the Federal budget. With a historically large deficit, Democrats are advocating that our answer is to raise taxes on American families. Democrats demand that we roll back tax relief, the tax relief that is responsible for the strong growth in our economy, the tax relief that is bringing down unemployment, the tax relief that amounts to only 1 percent, 1 percent, of the \$28.3 trillion, 10-year spending plan that we passed last year.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, 99 percent of the challenge in dealing with our Federal deficit is on the spending side. Clearly we have a spending problem, not a taxing problem in America; and I, for one, say when it comes to Federal spending, it is time to take out the trash. It is time to go after the costly waste, fraud and abuse that permeates every nook and cranny of the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, this body will soon take up the issue of transportation funding. Transportation is important. It is important to our economy; it is important to jobs. But before we sign a huge check drawn on the bank account of American families, should we not do everything that we can to ensure that every dime of transportation funding goes to roads, and not rip-offs?

Let me give you just a few examples. The Department of Transportation has historically squandered the hard-earned money of American families. Roughly two-thirds of Boston's "Big Dig" central artery is funded by Federal tax dollars. This has been called the greatest public works scandal of modern times.

This federally funded project has repeatedly exceeded cost estimates and lagged behind schedule. Is that not a surprise? But in the year 2000, the project was already five times more expensive than planned, \$11 billion over budget. An investigation revealed that project managers consistently were dishonest in their reporting of the project. \$11 billion of bloated budgets and mismanagement, and yet Democrats want to raise our taxes to pay for more of this?

Today the Federal Government is picking up 80 percent of the cost for a \$1.4 million project to upgrade just three bus shelters in upstate New York. For more than \$1 million of American taxpayers' hard-earned money, these bus shelters are going to be equipped with "radiant heating systems" and a layout "designed to appeal to passengers' sense of security." Even some of the beneficiaries of these new mansion-like bus shelters had concerns with its cost. One of the residents said, It just seems like a whole lot of money to me. Maybe they could just put some glass doors up.

American families are lucky if they can afford \$150,000 for a home, and the Federal Government is going to use their money to pay over \$370,000 apiece for bus shelters? And yet Democrats want to raise our taxes to pay for more of this?

Another investigation revealed that 29 Federal contracts worth roughly \$62 million were paid without any knowledge of whether they were even legally authorized. \$62 million that was not legally authorized, and yet Democrats want to raise our taxes to pay for more of this?

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few examples of the rampant waste, fraud and abuse and duplication in just one Federal agency. After you begin to look closely, you will discover that in many Federal programs, routinely they will squander 10, 20, even 30 percent of their taxpayer-funded budgets, and have for years.

There are many ways that we can save money in Washington without cutting any needed services and without raising taxes on our hard-working families, as Democrats seek to do. Because when it comes to spending, Mr.